

Pg. 58.

A  
DEFENCE  
OF  
Sir *Fopling Flutter*,  
A  
COMEDY

Written by  
Sir GEORGE ETHERIDGE. *k*

In which DEFENCE is shewn,  
That Sir *Fopling*, that merry Knight,  
was rightly compos'd by the Knight his  
Father, to answer the Ends of *Comedy*;  
and that he has been barbarously and  
scurrilously attack'd by the Knight his  
Brother, in the 65th *Spectator*,

By which it appears,  
That the latter Knight knows nothing  
of the Nature of COMEDY.

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• L O N D O N :


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THE COMEDY  
OF THE MERCHANTS OF VENICE  
BY SHAKESPEARE

A



A



# PREFACE.



THE following Defence of the Comedy of Sir Fopling Flutter, not only contains several Remarks upon Comedy in general; Remarks that are equally necessary for the Writing it successfully, and for the Judging of it surely; but every Article of that Defence, is a just Censure of a certain Comedy now in Rehearsal, if I can



## The Preface.

depend upon the Account which I have  
had of it, from several who have  
read it, or to whom it has been read.  
And that the Account which I have  
had of it is very just, I am apt to  
believe, not only from the Judgement  
and Sincerity of the Persons from  
whom I had it, but likewise from the  
scandalous Methods that are us'd, to  
give it a false and a transitory Reputa-  
tion.

I have formerly made Mention of  
Poetical Mountebanks. The Author of  
the Comedy now in Rehearsal, has all  
the Marks of an Empire of Parnassus.  
His Play has trotted as far as Edin-  
burgh Northward, and as far as  
Wales Westward, and has been read  
to more Persons than will be at the  
Representation of it, or vouchsafe to  
read it, when it is publish'd.

Another



## The Preface.

Another certain Sign that a Man is an Empiric, is, when he gives high Encomiums to himself, and his Novelties, and pretends at the same Time, that those Encomiums are given by others. Now, Advertisements have been sent to the News-Papers to this Effect, That the Comedy now in Rehearsal, is, in the Opinion of excellent Judges, the very best that ever came upon the English Stage. Now, no Body could send that Advertisement but the Author, or one of his Zany's, by his own Contrivance, or, at least, Connivance. No one could send such an Advertisement, or give such a Judgment, but a Fool or a Knave; a Knave, if he did it with a Design to impose on the World, and a Fool if he did it in the Sincerity of his Heart. For, to declare with Judgment, that a Play is the very best that ever came upon the English Stage, requires vast Consideration, profound Reflection, and a long, long Comparison. And what Mortal

is

## The Preface.

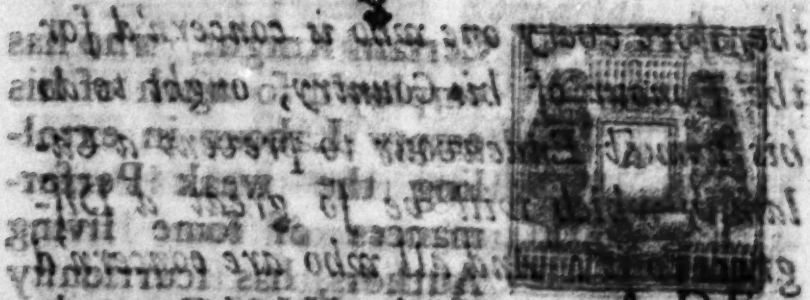
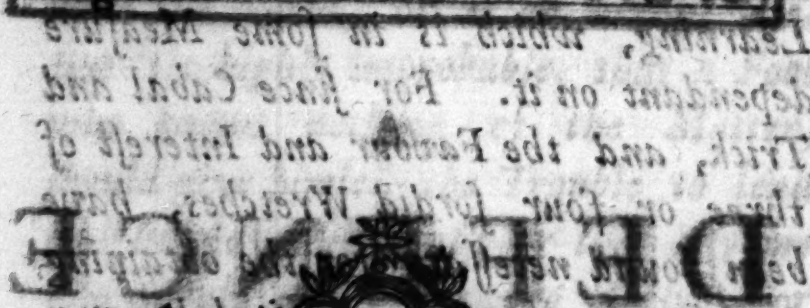
is qualify'd to pass such a Judgment upon a single momentary Reading? He who sent those Advertisements then, sent them with a Design to impose upon the World, or is an arrant Ass. But 'tis highly improbable, that a Fool who knows nothing of the Matter, should give himself the Trouble to send such an Advertisement; or that any one else should do it but the Author, or the Author's Zany's by his Subornation. For whose Interest could it be but theirs, to endeavour to impose upon the World? But now, if it shall appear by the following Treatise, that the Author of the Dramatick Piece in Rehearsal, knows nothing of the Nature of True Comedy, then how foolishly arrogant are those insolent and impudent Advertisements? These very Ways of Proceeding, sufficiently declare the Author's Consciousness of his own Incapacity; for a noble Genius will scorn such infamous Methods, and will resolve to owe his Reputation to his Merit, and not to trick-  
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## The Preface.

ing Artifice. These are some of the Methods which the present Managers of the Stage have us'd to ruine the Dramas, and with it all other Human Learning, which is in some Measure dependant on it. For since Cabal and Trick, and the Favour and Interest of three or four sordid Wretches, have been found necessary for the obtaining Success; every one who is duly qualify'd to write for the Stage, has either with a just Disdain refus'd it, or has undertaken it with extream Reluctancy. The Drama therefore is like to be lost, and all the Arts dependent on it; therefore every one who is concern'd for the Honour of his Country, ought to do his utmost Endeavour to prevent a Calamity which will be so great a Disgrace to it: And all who are concern'd for the Honour of the KING, ought to reflect with Indignation, that by the Malice, and the basest Breach of Trust of Persons whom His MAJESTY has appointed to encourage Literature, all  
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The Preface



A  
**DEFENCE**  
OF  
*Sir Fopling Flutter*



Certain Knight, who has employ'd so much of his empty Labour in extolling the weak Performances of some living Authors, has scurrilously and inhumanly in the 65th Spectator, attack'd one of the most entertaining Comedies of the last Age, written by a most ingenious Gentleman, who perfectly understood the World, the Court, and

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and the Town, and whose Reputation  
has now for near thirty Years together,  
surviv'd his Person, and will, in all Pro-  
bability, survive it as long as Comedy  
shall be in vogue; by which Proceed-  
ing, this worthy Knight has incur'd  
the double Censure, that Olivia in the  
plain'd Dealer has cast upon a certain  
Coxcomb, *Who rather, says she, then not  
flatter, will flatter the Poets of the Age,  
whom none will flatter; and rather then  
not rail, will rail at the Dead, at whom  
none besides will rail.*

If other Authors have had the Mis-  
fortune, to incur the Censure of ill-  
nature with unthinking deluded People,  
for no other so much as pretended Rea-  
son, than because to improve a noble  
Art, they have expos'd the Errors of  
popular Writers, who ow'd their Suc-  
cess, to the infamous Method of secur-  
ing an ignorant or a corrupt Cabal;  
when those Writers were not only liv-  
ing, but in full Prosperity, and at full  
Liberty to answer for themselves; what  
Appellation must he deserve, who has  
basely and scurrilously attack'd the Re-  
putation of a Favourite of the comick  
Muse, and of the Darling of the Graces,  
after Death has for so many Years de-  
priv'd



and the Town and whole Reputation  
priv'd him of the Means of answering  
for himself.

What the Knight falsely and impu-  
dently says of the Comedy, may be  
justly said of the Criticism, and of the  
whole 65th Spectator, that 'tis a perfect  
Contradiction to good Manners and good  
Sense. He allows this Comedy, he  
says, to be in Nature, but 'tis Nature  
in its utmost Corruption and Degen-  
eracy.

Suppose this were true, I would fain  
know where he learnt, that Nature in  
its utmost Corruption and Degeneracy  
is not the proper Subject of Comedy.  
Is not this a merry Person, who, after he  
has been writing what he calls Comedy  
for twenty Years together, shews plain-  
ly to all the World, that he knows no-  
thing of the Nature of true Comedy,  
and that he has not learnt the very first  
Rudiments of an Art which he pretends  
to teach? I must confess, the Ridicule  
in *Sir Fopling Flutter*, is an Imitation of  
corrupt and degenerate Nature, but not  
the most corrupt and the most degen-  
erate; for there is neither Adultery,  
Murder, nor Sodomy in it. But can  
any Thing but corrupt and degenerate

Nature be the proper Subject of Ridic-  
 cule? And can any Thing but Ridiculous  
 be the proper Subject of Comedy? Has  
 not *Aristotle* told us in the Fifth Chapter  
 of his *Poeticks*, that Comedy is an imi-  
 tation of the very worst of Men? Not  
 the worst, says He, in every Sort of  
 Vice, but the worst in the Ridiculous.  
 And has not *Horace*, in the Fourth Sa-  
 tyr of his First Book, reminded us, that  
 the old *Athenian* Comick Poets made of  
 their Business to bring all Sorts of Vil-  
 lains upon the Stage, Adulterers, Cheats,  
 Thieves, Murderers? But then they  
 always took Care, says a modern Cri-  
 tick, that those several Villanies should  
 be envelop'd in the Ridiculous, which al-  
 one, says he, could make them the  
 proper Subjects of Comedy. If this  
 facetious Knight had formerly liv'd at  
*Lacedemon*, with the same wrong turn'd  
 Noddle that he has now among us,  
 would he not, do you think, have in-  
 veighed against that People, for mewing  
 their drunken Slaves to their Children?  
 Would he not have represented it as a  
 Thing of most pernicious Example?  
 What the *Lacedemonians* did by Drunk-  
 enness, the Comick Poet does by that and  
 all other Vices. He exposes them to the  
 View of his Fellow Subjects, for no  
 other

other Reason, than to render them ridiculous and contemptible.

But the Criticism of the Knight in the  
foreſaid Spectator, is as contrary to good  
Manners, as it is to good Senſe. What  
Ariſtotle and his Interpreters ſay of Tra-  
gedy, that 'tis infallibly good, when it  
pleaſes both the Judges and the People,  
is certainly as true of Comedy; for the  
Judges are equally qualify'd to judge  
of both, and the People may be ſup-  
poſ'd to be better Judges of Comedy  
than they are of Tragedy, becauſe Co-  
medy is nothing but a Picture of com-  
mon Life, and a Representation of their  
own Humours and Manners. Now this  
Comedy of Sir Fopling Flutter, has not  
been only well receiv'd, and believ'd by  
the People of England to be a moſt  
agreeable Comedy for about Half a  
Century, but the Judges have been ſtill  
more pleas'd with it than the People.  
They have juſtly believ'd (I ſpeak of  
the Judges) that the Characters, and  
eſpecially the principal Characters, are  
admirably drawn, to answer the two  
Ends of Comedy, Pleaſure, and In-  
ſtruction; and that the Dialogue is the  
moſt charming that has been writ by  
the Moderns: That with Purity and  
Simplicity,



Simplicity, it has Art and Elegance, and with Force and Vivacity, the most Grace and Delicacy. This I know very well, was the Opinion of the most eminent Writers, and of the best Judges contemporary with the Author; and of the whole Court of King Charles the Second, a Court the most polite that ever England saw.

Now, after this Comedy has pass'd with the whole People of England, the knowing as well as the Ignorant, for a most entertaining and most instructive Comedy, for fifty Years together, after that long Time comes a Two Penny Author, who has given a thousand Proofs thro' the Course of his Rhapsodies, that he understands not a Title of all this Matter; this Author comes and impudently declares, that this whole celebrated Piece, that has for half a Century, been admir'd by the whole People of Great Britain, is a perfect Contradiction to good Sense, to good Manners, and to common Honesty. O Tempora! O Mores!

The Knight certainly wrote the foremention'd Spectator, tho' it has been writ these ten Years, on Purpose to make

make Way for his fine Gentleman, and therefore he endeavours to prove, that Sir *Hobling* is not that genteel Comedy, which the World allows it to be. And though according to his usual Custom, who never otherwise pretends to criticke, he does, byuffling and cutting and confounding Notions, impose upon his unwary Reader; for either Sir *George Ethelridge*, did design to make this a genteel Comedy, or he did not. If he did not design it, what is it to the Purpose, whether it is a genteel Comedy or not? Provided that it is a good one: For I hope, a Comedy may be a good one, and yet not a genteel one. The *Alchimist* is an admirable Comedy, and yet it is not a genteel one. We may say the same of *The Fox*, and the *silent Woman*, and of a great many more. But if Sir *George* did design to make it a genteel one, he was oblig'd to adapt it to that Notion of Gentility, which he knew very well, that the World at that Time had, and we for he succeeded accordingly. For it has pass'd for a very genteel Comedy, for fifty Years together. Could it be expected that the admirable Author, should accommodate himself, to the wrong headed Notions of a would be Critick, who was to appear fifty Years

Years after the first Acting of his Play:  
 A Griseok, who writes Criticism, as Men  
 commit Treason or Murder, by the in-  
 stigation of the Devil himself, when-  
 ever the old Gentleman owes the Knight  
 a Shame. To prove that this Comedy is not a  
 genteel one, he endeavours to prove  
 that one of the principal Characters, is  
 not a fine Gentleman. I appeal to every  
 impartial Man, if when he says, that  
 a Man or a Woman are genteel, he  
 means any Thing more, than that they  
 are agreeable in their Air, graceful in  
 in their Motions, and polite in their  
 Conversation. But when he endeavours  
 to prove, that Dorimont is not a fine  
 Gentleman, he says no more to the  
 Purpose, than he said before, when he  
 affirm'd that the Comedy is not a genteel  
 Comedy; for either the Author design'd  
 in Dorimont a fine Gentleman, or he did  
 not. If he did not, the Character is  
 ne'er the less excellent on that Account,  
 because Dorimont is an admirable Picture  
 of a Courtier in the Court of King  
 Charles the Second. But if Dorimont  
 was design'd for a fine Gentleman by  
 the Author, he was oblig'd to accom-  
 modate himself to that Notion of a  
 fine Gentleman. I shall only add, that I would  
 advise for the future, all the Gen-  
 tlemen



Years after the first of his Play:  
 the Gentleman, which the Court And  
 the Town both had at the Time of the  
 writing of this Comedy. 'Tis reasona-  
 ble to believe, that he did so, and we  
 see that he succeeded accordingly. For  
 Dorimont not only pass'd for a fine Gen-  
 tleman with the Court of King Charles  
 the Second, but he has pass'd for such  
 with all the World, for Fifty Years to-  
 gether. And what indeed can any one  
 mean, when he speaks of a fine Gentle-  
 man, but one who is qualify'd in Con-  
 versation, to please the best Company of  
 either Sex.

But the Knight will be satisfy'd with  
 no Notion of a fine Gentleman but his  
 own. A fine Gentleman, says he, is  
 one who is honest in his Actions, and  
 refined in his Language. If this be a  
 full Description of a fine Gentleman, I  
 will make bold to draw two Conse-  
 quences from it. The first is, That a  
 Pedant is often a fine Gentleman. For  
 I have known several of them, who  
 have been Honest in their Actions, and  
 Refined in their Language. The second  
 is, That I know a certain Knight, who,  
 though he should be allow'd to be a  
 Gentleman born, yet is not a fine Gen-  
 tleman. I shall only add, that I would  
 advise for the future, all the fine Gen-  
 tlemen,

to be done upon the Stage of the  
( 10 ) World.

lemen, who travel to London from  
Tipperary, to allow us Englishmen to  
know what we mean, when we speak  
our native Language.

To give a true Character of this  
charming Comedy, it must be acknow-  
ledg'd, that there is no great Masteryship  
in the Design of it. Sir George had but  
little of the artful and just Designs of  
Ben Johnson: But as Tragedy instructs  
chiefly by its Design, Comedy instructs  
by its Characters, which not only  
ought to be drawn truly in Nature, but  
to be the resembling Pictures of our  
Contemporaries, both in Court and  
Town. Tragedy answers to History-  
Painting, but Comedy to drawing of  
Portraits.

How little do they know of the  
Nature of true Comedy, who believe  
that its proper Business is to set us  
Patterns for Imitation: For all such  
Patterns are serious Things, and Laugh-  
ter is the Life, and the very Soul of  
Comedy. 'Tis its proper Business to  
expose Persons to our View, whose  
Views we may laugh at, and whose Fol-  
lies we may despise; and by shew-  
ing us what is done upon the Comick  
Stage, to shew us what ought never  
to

to be done upon the Stage of the World.

All the Characters in Sir Foppling Flatter, and especially the principal Characters, are admirably drawn, both to please and to instruct. First, they are drawn to please, because they are drawn in the Truth of Nature; but to be drawn in the Truth of Nature, they must be drawn with those Qualities that are proper to each respective Season of Life.

This is the chief Precept given for the forming the Characters, by the two Great Masters of the Rules which Nature herself dictated, and which have in every Age, for the Standards of writing successfully, and of judging surely, unless it were with Poetasters, and their foolish Admirers. The Words of Horace, in his Art of Poetry, are these, v. 153.

*Tu, quid ego & populo mecum desideret, I laudi.*

*Si sessoris eges aulae manentis, & usque Safferi, denac cantor, vos plaudite, dicat; Etatis cuiusque notandi sunt tibi mores, Mobilibusque decor naturis dandus, &*

*And* C 2. ing us what is done upon the Comick Stage, to shew us what ought never



And thus my Lord Roscommon has translated it.

Now hear what ev'ry Auditor expects,  
If you intend that he should stay to hear  
The Epilogue, and see the Curtain fall;  
Mark how our Tempers alter with our  
Years,

Then give the Beauty proper to each Age,  
And by this Rule form all your Characters.

And now see the Character that Horace gives of a Person who is in the Bloom of his Years.

De Arte Poetica, v. 161.

Imberbis tandem juvenis custode remoto,  
Gaudet equis, canibusque, & aprici  
gramine campi.

Cereus in vitium flecti, monitoribus asper,

Utilium tardus provisor, prodigus aris,

Sublimis, cupidusque, & amata relin-

quere pernix.

And thus the fore-said Noble Poet translates it:

A Youth that first casts off his Tutor's  
Rule,

Loves Horses, Hounds, and Sports, and  
Exercise

Prone

And thus you are apt to be  
 Prone to all Vice, impatient of Reproof,  
 Proud, careless, fond, inconstant, and  
 profuse.

Now, Horace, to shew the Importance  
 of this Precept, as soon as he has done  
 with the Characters of the four Parts  
 of Life, returns to it, repeats it, and  
 enforces it.

*Ibid*, v. 176.

*No forte seniles  
 Mandentur juvem partes, pueroque vi-  
 ces,*  
*Semper in adiunctis, ævoque morabimur  
 aptis.*

That a Poet may never be guilty of such  
 an Absurdity, says he, as to give the  
 Character of an Old Man to a Young Man,  
 or of a Boy to a Middle Ag'd Man, let  
 him take Care to adhere to those Qualities,  
 which are necessarily or probably annexed  
 to each respective Season of Life.

If a Dramatick Poet does not observe  
 this Rule, he misses that which gives  
 the Beauty, and the Decorum, which  
 alone can make his Characters please.

As Horace is but an Epitomizer of  
 Aristotle, in giving Rules for the Cha-  
 racters;

acters; that Philosopher gives us more at large the Character of a Person in his early Bloom, in the 14th Chapter of the Second Book of his Rhetorick.

Young Men, says he, have strong Appetites, and are ready to undertake any thing, in order to satisfy them; and of all those Appetites which have a Relation to the Body, they are most powerfully sway'd by Venereal ones, in which they are very changeable, and are quickly cloy'd. For their Desires are rather acute than lasting; like the Hunger and Thirst of the Sick. They are prone to Anger, and easily provok'd; vehement in their Anger, and ready to obey the Dictates of it. For by Reason of the Concern which they have for their Honour, they cannot bear the being undervall'd, but resent an Affront heinously. And as they are desirous of Honour, they are more ambitious of Victory. For Youth is desirous of excellency, and Victory is a Sort of Excellency. Thus far Aristotle.

And here it may not be amiss to shew, that this Rule is founded in Reason and in Nature: In order to which let us see what Dacier remarks upon that Verse of Horace, which we cited above.

Mobili-  
can possibly please. And as he cannot please.



that Philosopher gives us more  
at large the Character of a Person in  
the 14th Chapter  
*Mobilibusque decor, naturis dantur, et  
annis.*

Behold, says he, a very fine, and  
very significant Verse; which tells us,  
if we render it Word for Word, That  
we ought to give to moveable Natures and  
Years their proper Beauty. By moveable  
Natures, (says Dacier) Horace means  
Age, which still runs on like a River, and  
which, as it runs, gives different Inclina-  
tions to Men; and those different Inclina-  
tions make what he calls Decor, the Beau-  
ty proper to the Age. For every Part of  
Man's Life has its proper Beauties, like  
every Season of the Year. He that gives  
to Manly Age the Beauties of Youth, or  
to Youth the Beauties of Manly Age, does  
like a Painter, who should paint the Au-  
tumn with the Ornaments of Summer, or  
the Summer with the Ornaments of Au-  
tumn.

A Comick Poet, who gives to a Young  
Man the Qualities that belong to a Mid-  
dle Age'd Man, or to an Old Man, can  
answer neither of the Ends of his Art.  
He cannot please, because he writes out  
of Nature, of which all Poetry is an  
Imitation, and without which, no Poem  
can possibly please. And as he cannot  
please,

please, he cannot instruct ; because, by shewing such a young Man as is not to be seen in the World, he shews a Monster, and not a Man, sets before us a particular Character, instead of an allegorical and universal one, as all his Characters, and especially his principal Characters, ought to be ; and therefore can give no general Instruction, having no Moral, no Fable, and therefore no Comedy.

Now if any one is pleased to compare the Character of *Dorimont*, to which the Knight has taken so much absurd Exception with the two forementioned Descriptions, he will find in his Character all the chief distinguishing Strokes of them. For such is the Force of Nature, and so admirable a Talent had she given Sir George for Comedy, that, tho' to my certain Knowledge he understood neither *Greek* nor *Latin*, yet one would swear, that in drawing his *Dorimont*, he copy'd the foresaid Draughts, and especially that of *Aristotle*. *Dorimont* is a young Courtier, haughty, vain, and prone to Anger, amorous, false, and inconstant. He debauches *Lovett*, and betrays her ; loves *Belinda*, and as soon as he enjoys her is false to her.

But

But 2<sup>dly</sup>, The Characters in *Sir Fopling* are admirably contriv'd to please, and more particularly the principal ones, because we find in those Characters, a true Resemblance of the Persons both in Court and Town, who liv'd at the Time when that Comedy was writ. For *Rapin* tells us with a great deal of Judgment, That Comedy is as it ought to be, when an Audience is apt to imagine, that instead of being in the Pit and Boxes, they are in some Assembly of the Neighbourhood, or in some Family Meeting, and that we see nothing done in it, but what is done in the World. For it is, says he, not worth one Farthing, if we do not discover our selves in it, and do not find in it both our own Manners, and those of the Persons with whom we live and converse.

The Reason of this Rule is manifest : For as 'tis the Business of a Comick Poet to cure his Spectators of Vice and Folly, by the Apprehension of being laugh'd at; 'tis plain that his Business must be with the reigning Follies and Vices. The violent Passions, which are the Subjects of Tragedy, are the same in every Age, and appear with the same Face; but those Vices and Follies, which

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are the Subjects of Comedy, are seen to vary continually. Some of those that belonged to our Ancestors, have no Relation to us, and can no more come under the Cognisance of our present Comick Poets, than the Sweating and Squeezing Sickness can come under the Practice of our contemporary Physicians. What Vices and Follies may infect those who are to come after us, we know not, 'tis the present, the reigning Vices, and Follies, that must be the Subjects of our present Comedy. The Comick Poet therefore must take Characters from such Persons as are his Contemporaries, and are infected with the foresaid Follies and Vices.

Agreeable to this, is the Advice which Boileau, in his Art of Poetry, gives to the Comick Poets :

*Etudiez la Cour, & connoissez la ville,  
L'une & l'autre est tousjours en modeles  
fertile,  
C'est par la que Moliere illustra ses  
comtes,  
Peut-être de son Art eut réponse la paille,  
Et.*

Now I remember very well, that upon the first acting this Comedy it

was

was generally believed to be an agreeable Representation of the Persons of Condition of both Sexes, both in Court and Town; and that all the World was charm'd with *Dorimont*; and that it was unanimously agreed, that he had in him several of the Qualities of *Walter Earl of Rochester*, as, his Wit, his Spirit, his amorous Temper, the Charms that he had for the fair Sex, his Falshood, and his Inconstancy; the agreeable Manner of his chiding his Servants, which the late Bishop of *Salisbury* takes Notice of in his Life; and lastly, his repeating, on every Occasion, the Verses of *Waller*, for whom that noble Lord had a very particular Esteem; witness his Imitation of the Tenth Satire of the First Book of *Horace*.

*Waller, by Nature for the Bays design'd,  
With Spirit, Force, and Fancy unconfin'd,  
In Panegyrick is above Mankind.*

Now, as several of the Qualities in *Dorimont's* Character were taken from that *Earl of Rochester*, so they who were acquainted with the late *Sir Fleetwood Shepherd*, know very well, that not a little of that Gentleman's Character is to be found in *Medley*.

But the Characters in this Comedy are very well form'd to instruct as well as to please, especially those of *Dorimant* and of *Loveit*; and they instruct by the same Qualities to which the Knight has taken so much whimsical Exception; as *Dorimant* instructs by his Insulting and his Perfidiousness; and *Loveit* by the Violence of her Resentment and her Anguish. For *Loveit* has Youth, Beauty, Quality, Wit, and Spirit. And it was depending upon these, that she repos'd so dangerous a Trust in *Dorimant*, which is a just Caution to the Fair Sex, never to be so conceited of the Power of their Charms, or their other extraordinary Qualities, as to believe they can engage a Man to be true to them, to whom they grant the best Favour, without the only sure Engagement, without which they can never be certain, that they shall not be hated and despis'd by that very Person whom they have done every Thing to oblige.

To conclude with one General Observation, That Comedy may be qualify'd in a powerful Manner both to instruct and to please; the very Constitution of its Subject ought always to be Ridiculous. Comedy, says *Rapin*, is an Image of common Life, and its

End



End is to expose upon the Stage the Defects of particular Persons, in order to cure the Defects of the Publick, and to correct and amend the People, by the Fear of being laugh'd at. That therefore, says he, which is most essential to Comedy, is certainly the Ridicule.

Every Poem is qualify'd to instruct, and to please most powerfully by that very Quality which makes the Fort and the Characteristick of it, and which distinguishes it from all other Kinds of Poems. As Tragedy is qualify'd to instruct and to please, by Terror and Compassion, which two Passions ought always to be predominant in it, and to distinguish it from all other Poems. Epic Poetry pleases and instructs chiefly by Admiration, which reigns throughout it, and distinguishes it from Poems of every other Kind. Thus Comedy instructs and pleases most powerfully by the Ridicule, because that is the Quality which distinguishes it from every other Poem. The Subject therefore of every Comedy ought to be ridiculous by its Constitution; the Ridicule ought to be of the very Nature and Essence of it. Where there is none of that, there can be no Comedy. It ought to

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is by the Author that there is in  
 right both in the Incidents and in the  
 Characters, and especially in the prin-  
 cipal Characters, which ought to be ri-  
 diculous in themselves, or so contriv'd,  
 as to shew and expose the Ridicule of  
 others. In all the Masterpieces of Ben-  
 Johnson, the principal Character has  
 the Ridicule in himself, as Morose in  
*The Silent Woman*, Volpone in *The Fox*, and  
 Subtle and Face in *The Alchemist*. And the  
 very Ground and Foundation of all these  
 Comedies is ridiculous. 'Tis the very same  
 Thing in the Masterpieces of Moliere  
*The Mis-Andrope*, the *Impostor*, the *Hourel*,  
 and the *Femmes Secourues*. Nay, the  
 Reader will find, that in most of his  
 other Pieces, the principal Characters are  
 ridiculous; as, *L'Ecurdy*, *Les precieuses*,  
*Ridicules*, *Le Cocu Imaginaire*, *Le Fastueux*,  
 and *Monsieur de pousceaugnac*, *Le Bour-*  
*geois Gentilhomme*, *L'Ecole de Maris*,  
*L'Ecole des Femmes*, *L'Amour Medicis*,  
*Le Medicin Malgre luy*, *Le Mariage*  
*Force*, *George Dandin*, *Les Fourberies de*  
*Scapin*, *Le Malade Imaginaire*. The  
 Reader will not only find, upon Re-  
 flection, that in all these Pieces the  
 principal Characters are ridiculous, but  
 that in most of them there is the Rid-  
 icule of Comedy in the very Titles.

When comes the stage? It is  
 'Tis

'Tis by the Ridicule that there is in the Character of Sir Fopling, which is one of the principal ones of this Comedy, and from which it takes its Name, that he is so very well qualify'd to please and to instruct. What true Englishman is there, but must be pleas'd to see this ridiculous Knight made the Jest and the Scorn of all the other Characters, for shewing, by his foolish aping foreign Customs and Manners, that he prefers another Country to his own? And of what important Instruction must it be to all our Youth who travel, to shew them, that if they so far forget the Love of their Country, as to declare by their espousing foreign Customs and Manners, that they prefer France or Italy to Great Britain, at their Return, they must justly expect to be the Jest and the Scorn of their own Countrymen.

Thus, I hope, I have convinc'd the Reader, that this Comical Knight, Sir Fopling, has been justly form'd by the Knight his Father, to instruct and please, whatever may be the Opinion to the contrary of the Knight his Brother.

Whenever *The Fine Gentleman* of the latter comes upon the Stage, I shall be glad



glad to see that it has all the shining Qualities which recommend Sir *Fopling*, that his Characters are always drawn in Nature, and that he never gives to a young Man the Qualities of a Middle-aged Man, or an old one; that they are the just Images of our Contemporaries, and of what we every Day see in the World; that instead of setting us Patterns for our Imitation, which is not the proper Business of *Comedy*, he makes those Follies and Vices ridiculous, which we ought to shun and despise; that the Subject of his *Comedy* is comical by its Constitution; and that the Ridicule is particularly in the Grand Incidents, and in the principal Characters. For a true Comick Poet is a Philosopher, who, like old *Democritus*, always instructs us laughing.

**F I N I S.**

